



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

TWO MEN SENTENCED IN HUMAN CONTAINER SMUGGLING SCHEME

LOS ANGELES – Two men were sentenced today to five years in prison each on human smuggling charges stemming from the discovery of 17 Chinese nationals inside a shipping container at the Port of Los Angeles in February 2004.

The men, Jian Rong Tan and Wen Hsue Chang, were found guilty in May 2004 following a week-long trial on nine separate counts, including conspiracy, bringing aliens into the United States for financial gain, and harboring illegal aliens.

Tan and Chang traveled with the 17 smuggled migrants inside the 40-foot shipping container on board a Cypriot-flagged vessel, the Ningbo. Agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) say Tan and Chang served as the “enforcers” during the journey and controlled the group’s access to food.

In addition, two brothers in Hong Kong suspected of being the so-called “snakeheads” who orchestrated the smuggling scheme have also been charged in the incident. Yau-Hang Chan and his younger brother Yau-Hung Chan were indicted in September 2004 by a grand jury in Los Angeles for conspiracy to bring aliens into the country illegally and doing so for financial gain. Chinese authorities also prosecuted the brothers for human smuggling violations. Yau-Hang was sentenced to four years and two months in a Chinese prison for his role in the scheme. He remains behind bars at this time. His brother Yau-Hung was acquitted in the Chinese prosecution, but still faces charges in the United States.

“The perils associated with this kind of human smuggling are extreme, so it’s entirely appropriate that the people behind these schemes should pay a high price themselves,” said Loraine Brown, the special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Los Angeles. “ICE is committed to working with law enforcement agencies around the globe to identify and dismantle the criminal organizations behind this ruthless enterprise.”

The smuggling plot was uncovered February 24, 2004, after ICE agents, acting on a tip, opened the hard-topped container and found the Chinese nationals inside. In addition to food and water, the shipping container was outfitted with several car batteries that were used to power small portable fans. A small, crudely fashioned ventilation hatch had been cut in the container's floor. The smuggled migrants from China's Fujian Province told ICE agents they were being charged approximately \$40,000 apiece for the trip to the United States.

Since the arrival of the Ningbo in February 2004, four more containers carrying smuggled Chinese migrants have been intercepted at the Port of Los Angeles in two separate incidents. The most recent occurred earlier this month when 29 smuggled Chinese were apprehended after being smuggled to Los Angeles inside two shipping containers on board the NYK Artemis. No charges have yet been filed in connection with that incident, but ICE's investigation is ongoing.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.